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Morris Embraces International Students

Summary: International students excel academically and enjoy rich experiences while living and learning in Morris.

(August 29, 2013)-Since the University of Minnesota, Morris Strategic Planning Task Force set a goal in 2006 to increase the institution's international student population, the number of international students at Morris has risen from one to over nine percent. At Morris, these students enjoy a safe and vibrant environment where they can focus on their studies and take part in a variety of co-curricular activities. With support from the campus community, they excel academically and enjoy rich experiences while living and learning in the United States.

Morris's 176 international students hail from 15 countries, including Russia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and more. The majority of these students (145) are from China, and 120 have completed a year of study at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFU). According to Pilar Blanco Eble, assistant director of the [International Student Program](#), this number of Chinese students within the international student body mirrors national trends.

Eble asserts that international students are generally attracted to the excellent academics, small size, and safety offered by Morris. Affordable tuition is an added attraction, since international students are subject to the same tuition rate as domestic students. Eble argues that the institution's added value lies in its liberal arts curriculum, since this model is not typically offered in Chinese universities, where teachers and students emphasize major coursework instead.

In order to help international students "take advantage of all Morris has to offer," Eble and the International Student Program implement cultural programming as well as a mandatory international-student orientation. In addition to this week-long mandatory orientation, the program also provides the [Summer Transition for English Language and Liberal Arts Readiness \(STELLAR\) program](#), which aims to prepare students for success by providing a strong foundation in academic English. Program participants receive intensive English and liberal-arts instruction and take part in cultural enrichment opportunities.

Prior to entering the STELLAR program, students report anxiety regarding classroom English and academic success as well as making friends and adjusting to cultural differences. According to Eble, the purpose of the program is to provide students the tools they need to overcome these fears and enjoy the things they anticipate: new friends, culture, and environment, studies and major, development, and more.

A graduate of the 2013 STELLAR program, Yuntuo Wang (Tracy) '17 Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, came to Morris this summer after completing a year of studies at SUFU. Like many of his American and international peers, he hopes to excel academically and immerse himself in campus life throughout the coming year.

"I love America, and I love the quiet environment," he says. "I hope I can join the school committee and get good grades." He looks forward to activities like basketball games and dancing as well.

This desire for a well-rounded undergraduate experience is precisely what Eble and others hope international students gain from their Morris careers, and according to Chancellor Jacqueline R. Johnson, these students also have a lot to offer during their time here.

“The students in our International Student Program are as diverse as their American counterparts,” she says. “They bring with them a broad spectrum of talent, interests, personalities, and dispositions. And they contribute to the extraordinary diversity of this community.”

Having completed the STELLAR program on August 14, incoming international students are now attending their first fall semester classes. Additional information on the International Student and STELLAR programs is available [online](#).

Incoming international students celebrating their completion of the STELLAR program on August 14

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.